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Viewing cable 07BUENOSAIRE406, U/S BURNS AND A/S SHANNON FEBRUARY 9 MEETING WITH

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#07BUENOSAIRE406.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
07BUENOSAIRE406	2007-03-02 16:22	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Buenos Aires

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1361157-la-relacion-con-chavez-al-desnudo>

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OO RUEHWEB

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O 021622Z MAR 07
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 000406

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR P:HEIDE BRONKE
WHA FOR TOM SHANNON

WHA/BSC FOR DOUG BARNES, BRUCE FRIEDMAN AND DREW BLAKENEY
NSC FOR JOSE CARDENAS AND JUAN ZARATE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/02/2017

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SUBJECT: U/S BURNS AND A/S SHANNON FEBRUARY 9 MEETING WITH
ARGENTINE CHIEF OF CABINET ALBERTO FERNANDEZ

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4(b)and(d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Under Secretary Burns and Assistant
Secretary Shannon, accompanied by Ambassador, met February 9

SIPDIS

with Cabinet Chief Alberto Fernandez. During a brief drop-by, President Kirchner welcomed U/S Burns and A/S Shannon and thanked them for their visit. Fernandez expressed the GOA's desire for a "mature" relationship and honest communication with the U.S., and agreed that the two countries have common ground on issues of social development, the fight against drugs and crime, and international issues such as peace-keeping in Haiti, non-proliferation and counterterrorism. In the context of a "mature relationship," U/S Burns raised the public criticism by the GOA of a commercial advocacy issue that erupted on the eve of his visit. Fernandez said the criticism had not been aimed at the U.S. and that he would make that clear (he did so in a February 10 radio interview). Fernandez and Burns agreed that the issue resulted from a misunderstanding. They also discussed broader investment concerns. U/S Burns encouraged Argentina to act as a regional leader by supporting democracy in Bolivia and Cuba and stressed that Venezuela's President Chavez was more a threat to the region than to the U.S. Fernandez, in turn, asked the U.S. to "pay more attention" to Latin America. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) U.S. Participants:

Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs
Thomas Shannon, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs
Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne

William McIlhenny, Member, Policy Planning Council(S/P)

Heide Bronke, P Special Assistant

David Alarid, Political Officer

Katrissa Peffley, Notetaker

Argentine Participants:

Chief of Cabinet Alberto Fernandez

(Drop-by by President Nestor Kirchner)

ARGENTINA AND THE US: A MATURE RELATIONSHIP

13. (SBU) U/S Burns and A/S Shannon, accompanied by Ambassador, met with Argentine Cabinet Chief (and member of the Kirchner inner circle) Alberto Fernandez. Fernandez stated his belief that U.S.-Argentine relations were positive and improving, acknowledging past problems, specifically at the November 2005 Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata. He complimented Ambassador Wayne and former Ambassador Gutierrez for their work in Argentina and their contribution to U.S.-Argentine relations and noted the GOA's desire for a mature bilateral relationship with open communications.

14. (U) U/S Burns also highlighted the positive nature of the relationship, emphasizing common ground on issues related to non-proliferation, counterterrorism, counternarcotics and peacekeeping. He praised Argentina for its peace-keeping efforts in Haiti and its regional leadership on questions of non-proliferation, and noted that Argentina is taking the difficult step of dealing with its history of human rights abuses. U/S Burns mentioned the USG's partnership with Brazil on the development of biofuels, and suggested that similar cooperation with Argentina might be possible.

15. (C) U/S Burns noted, however, that in "mature" relationships, "frank conversations" between parties are generally understood to be private. He expressed surprise that a private letter from Ambassador Wayne to Planning

Minister De Vido had sparked an uproar in the Argentine press. Just the day before the visit of U/S Burns and A/S Shannon, one of Argentina's major daily newspapers published reports of a letter from Ambassador Wayne to Planning Minister De Vido, written in support of a U.S. fund's planned investments in Argentina. President Kirchner responded to the newspaper reports by publicly protesting the "pressure" from the U.S. U/S Burns questioned Kirchner's

response noting that the Embassy was engaging in what is widely accepted to be normal commercial advocacy on behalf of reputable American companies. Burns reiterated the fact that the USG does not desire a "divisive" relationship with the GoA.

16. (SBU) Fernandez laid the blame for the incident squarely on the newspaper, calling its actions "impertinent," "ungrateful" and "embarrassing," and accusing the newspaper of publishing the letter "with bad intentions" because it implied that bribes were involved. He stated that comments by the GoA were "not intended as criticism" of the Embassy or the Ambassador, and assured U/S Burns that if the GoA had been upset by the letter, it would have expressed its concerns to the Embassy directly. Fernandez said he would make sure that it was understood publicly that the criticism was not aimed at the U.S. Embassy or the Ambassador. (Note: He made these points in a radio interview on Saturday, February 10, which was carried in the Sunday Papers. In the interview, he described relations with the U.S. as "good" and "mature." End note.) Burns and Fernandez agreed that the commotion could be attributed to a "misunderstanding" and was now behind us.

ARGENTINA AND LATIN AMERICA: A REGIONAL LEADER

17. (C) U/S Burns asked Fernandez for views on how the USG and GoA could work together to deal with challenges facing

Latin America, saying that President Bush and Secretary Rice consider Argentina to be a leader in the region. Fernandez said he attributed the current situations in Venezuela and Bolivia and elsewhere to the failed policies and corruption of previous governments, and, in particular, their failure to respond to the social and economic needs of the people. Fernandez said that the USG needs to pay more attention to Latin America and its needs. The impression in Latin America, he said, is that too often the USG tries to dictate what Latin American countries should do, according to its own agenda. The U.S., he noted, has more influence than it realizes. Fernandez also implied that the USG should not be so concerned with ""types"" of government, whether left-wing, right-wing, or centrist. Using Argentina as an example, he said that some critics say the GoA leans too far to the left, others say that it leans too far to the right, but in fact the GoA just makes ""rational"" decisions about what is best for Argentina.

18. (C) U/S Burns and A/S Shannon stressed that the USG has actively sought to reach out to Morales in Bolivia and Correa in Ecuator. The U/S said that USG policy was ""ecumenical"" and that the USG had no problem working with democratically elected governments, be they left-leaning or right.

19. (C) Burns explained that Venezuela was another matter. He told Fernandez that the USG has deliberately decided to adopt a low profile approach to Venezuela, not responding to Chavez,s ""immature, crude"" attacks on President Bush. He explained that the U.S. does not see Chavez as a direct threat to the U.S. but that we do see him as a threat to democracy in the region and believe other leaders in the region ought to ""limit"" and ""contain"" him. U/S Burns asked Fernandez how he would assess Chavez,s influence in Latin America. Fernandez dismissed the idea that Chavez might be the ""future leader of Latin America."" He claimed that Chavez,s ""unnecessary"" behavior had been ""severely questioned"" by President Kirchner during a personal meeting.

Fernandez said that Chavez,s attitude is ""dangerous,"" and expressed the opinion that the Venezuelan president,s ""sermons"" show that he wants to be Castro,s successor in Latin America. Although freely critical of Chavez, Fernandez tempered his negative remarks by stating that Chavez is president by the will of the Venezuelan people, and dismissed Chavez,s fiery rhetoric as far more extreme than his intentions.

¶10. (C) U/S Burns urged the GoA to be an active advocate for democracy as Cuba enters a period of transition in governance. He noted that the USG had been careful in its public commentary during Castro,s illness and hoped that other Latin American countries such as Brazil and Argentina would step up and call for democracy. Fernandez replied that the GoA has a ""respectful but distant"" relationship with Cuba and is dissatisfied with the current undemocratic government.

He referred specifically to the case of Cuban doctor Hilda Molina, currently restricted from leaving Cuba to visit her family in Argentina.

¶11. (C) Fernandez touched briefly on the situation of other countries in the region. He called the situation in Bolivia ""unique and complicated,"" and described Evo Morales as a president with good intentions but a rudimentary understanding of power and the world. He claimed that the GoA has counseled Morales not to pick fights with the U.S. because the U.S. is not his enemy, but he also acknowledged tha Morales thought Bolivia should follow the example set by Cuba and Venezuela. Fernandez spoke of Argentina,s relationship with Brazil in very positive and friendly terms.

He also called attention to Ecuador,s Rafael Correa as a ""visionary"" president with very good understanding of world affairs.

FERNANDEZ IN THE U.S.

112. (SBU) Fernandez noted he would be a guest lecturer at Harvard in April. U/S Burns invited Fernandez to have lunch with him in Washington D.C. during that visit.

WAYNE

=====CABLE ENDS=====

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